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Voters approve pension bonds

$1 billion reform package intended to shore up funds for city workers

By Mike Morris

Houston voters passed a $1 billion pension bond referendum by a wide margin late Tuesday, securing Mayor Sylvester Turner's landmark reform package and, the mayor hopes, marking the beginning of the end of a 16-year fiscal crisis.

The ballot item's passage means the city can follow through on its plan to infuse $750 million into the police pension and $250 million into the municipal workers' pension to improve their funding levels and lower Houston's annual payments into its pension funds.

If voters had rejected the measure, up to $1.8 billion of the $2.8 billion in hard-won benefit cuts in the reform bill would have been rescinded, adding tens of millions of dollars in costs to the city budget overnight.

"This effort has not been easy," the mayor said at an election night party. "Tonight is not a victory for Sylvester Turner. Tonight is not a victory for the members of City Council. Tonight is not just a victory for the employees. Tonight is a victory for the city of Houston."

The city's pension crisis began when leaders agreed to a series of dimly understood benefit increases between 1997 and 2001 that led the city's costs to spike. In response, the police and municipal pension funds agreed to cuts but also let the city pay what officials

Vote continues on A17

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CITY | STATE

Rep. Poe says he won't seek re-election

Congressman Ted Poe announces he will not run again for his House seat, joining a growing list of Texas Republicans planning to retire. **Page A3**

Houston Chronicle

Rep. Poe, R-Humble, was first elected to Congress in 2005.

TRAFFIC

290-Loop 610 connection to close down

Commuters on Highway 290 headed northeast on Loop 610 already have been thrown for a loop by years of construction, and they're going to endure more pain. **Page A3**

NATION

Democrats win governor races in two states

Democratic candidates in Virginia and New Jersey who sought to tap into anti-Donald Trump sentiments win contests to become their states' next governors. **Page A12**

WORLD

U.S. now stands alone opposing climate pact

The U.S. is now the only country that has declined to be a part of the Paris climate agreement, after Syria announces it will join the landmark pact. **Page A16**

BUSINESS

Non-lawyers grow powerful in Texas firms

Law firms are turning over some of their most strategic decisions to non-lawyer professionals in a seismic and, some argue, long-overdue shift. **Page B1**

Trump warns N. Korea: 'Do not try us'

President also indicates willingness to negotiate

By Jonathan Lemire and Jill Colvin
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL, South Korea — President Donald Trump delivered a sharp warning to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Wednesday, telling him the weapons he's acquiring "are not making you safer. They are putting your regime in grave danger."

In a speech delivered hours after he aborted a visit to the heavily fortified Korean demilitarized zone due to bad weather, Trump called on all nations to join forces "to isolate the brutal regime of North Korea — to deny it any form of support, supply, or acceptance."

"Today, I hope I speak not only for our countries but for all civilized nations, when I say to the North: Do not underestimate us. And do not try us," he told South Korean lawmakers. "We will defend our common security, our shared prosperity and our sacred liberty."

Trump had been scheduled to make the unannounced early morning

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TNS

President Donald Trump is on a two-day state visit to South Korea.

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS SHOOTING

Killer made threats, fled mental hospital

David J. Phillip / Associated Press

Wilson County Sheriff Joe Tackitt Jr. walks past the front doors where bullet holes are marked by police on Tuesday at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs.

REVIEW: Cornyn wants tighter rules on reporting military crimes

By St. John Barned-Smith, Sig Christenson and Kevin Diaz

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS — The gunman who killed 26 churchgoers Sunday made death threats against his military superiors, smuggled weapons onto his New Mexico Air Force Base and was admitted to a mental health facility with what were described as "mental disorders."

The details were included in a report filed with the El Paso Police Department by officers who detained Devin Patrick Kelley at a bus station in 2012 after he escaped from the mental health facility where he was getting treatment.

He was described as "a danger to himself and others as he had already been caught sneaking firearms onto Holloman Air Force Base," and was believed to be "attempting to carry out death threats that (he) had made on his military chain of command," according to the June 13,

Military continues on A15

SURVIVOR: Worshipper describes terrifying scene of slaughter

By Vincent T. Davis
SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS — When the shooting started, Roseanne Solis dove under a pew, terrified that she was about to die as screams filled the sanctuary.

She heard someone shout, "Everybody get down!" as bullets ripped through the carpet. Shots rained through the church, where up front, near the altar, youngsters sat together in one group and older members sat together in another.

Solis saw people bleeding, running, trying to hide. Her arm grew hot as blood spread down her left arm. She didn't even realize she had been shot.

When she saw black boots from her vantage point under the pew, she had a fleeting moment of relief, thinking it was a policeman. Seconds later,

Survivor continues on A14

Jay Janner / Austin American-Statesman via AP

Rosanne Solis was shot twice as she crouched under a pew while the gunman roamed the aisles.

Sexual misconduct roils N. Texas youth lockup

New allegations belie reforms state made to system after 2005 scandal

By Mike Ward

AUSTIN — Ten years after a sex abuse scandal sparked top-to-bottom reforms in Texas' juvenile justice system, investigators are probing allegations of widespread sexual misconduct between guards and teenaged offenders at a North Texas lockup.

A former correctional officer at the Gainesville State School, Samuel Lee Wright, was convicted in July of improper sexual activity with youths in custody, a second-degree felony, and was sentenced to 10 years in prison, officials said. About 230 youths are housed at the facility.

Two additional correctional officers, both women, have been arrested in recent weeks on charges that they had sex with 18-year-old youths in custody or tried to. An additional arrest is expected in coming days on similar charges, officials said. One of the correctional officers already arrested is pregnant with an offender's child, records show.

"The Texas Juvenile Justice Department takes its mandate to protect youths and communities very seriously, and has implemented

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